

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 14509

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: JA, KN, PFOR

SUBJECT: FOREIGN OFFICE DISCUSSION OF WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH
KOREAN RESOLUTION AT UN

REF: TOKYO 14304 B. TOKYO 14393

SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS SEPTEMBER 27,
FONOFF NE ASAI DIVDIR ENDO SUGGESTED THAT
RELATIVELY LUKE-WARM RESPONSE TO HOSTILE RESOLUTION BY
NON-ALIGNED NATIONS AND COMMUNIST ALLIES HAD LED NORTH
KOREA TO WITHDRAW RESOLUTION FROM UNGA CONSIDERATION.
ENDO SUSPECTED AS YET UNKNOWN DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS
HAD ALSO PLAYED MAJOR ROLE IN PYONGYANG'S DECISION.
HE SPECULATED THAT NORTH KOREANS MAY BE CONSIDERING
ADOPTION OF MORE FLEXIBLE, LESS HOSTILE POSITION
TOWARDS US AND JAPAN. EVEN IF SUCH A SHIFT IS TACTICAL
IN NATURE, IT MIGHT HAVE MAJOR IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH
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KOREA'S FUTURE STRATEGY. END SUMMARY.

1. FONOFF NE ASIA DIVDIR ENDO SEPTEMBER 27
OFFERED EMBOFFS HIS ASSESSMENT OF NORTH KOREAN MOTIVES
IN WITHDRAWAL OF HOSTILE RESOLUTION AT UNGA. FOLLOWING
EXTERNAL FACTORS MAY HAVE LED NORTH KOREANS TO
BELIEVE THEIR RESOLUTION WOULD NOT GAIN MORE, OR MIGHT
EVEN RECEIVE LESS, VOTES THAN PREVIOUSLY.

2. DISAFFECTION AMONG NON-ALIGNED - RESPONSE TO
HAD-LINE NORTH KOREAN RESOLUTION AMONG NON-ALIGNED
COUNTRIES WAS NOT AS FAVORABLE AS EXPECTED. AT
COLOMBO NAM SUMMIT, 23 NATIONS EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS.
NORTH KOREAN INFLEXIBILITY IN REFUSING TO DEAL WITH
SOUTH KOREA APPARENTLY CAUSED NEGATIVE REACTION AMONG
SOME COUNTRIES. ENTIRE KOREAN QUESTION WAS NOT
OF PRESSING INTEREST TO MOST THIRD WORLD NATIONS,
WHO MAY HAVE BELIEVED CONFRONTATIONAL UN DEBATE ON
KOREA WOULD DETRACT FROM MORE CRITICAL NAM ISSUES
AND INDEED, MIGHT JEOPARDIZE NAM SOLIDARITY.

3. IMPLICIT NEGATIVE RESPONSE OF COMMUNIST
ALLIES - ENDO SUGGESTED THAT DISPLEASURE OVER
PANMUNJOM ISSUE MIGHT HAVE AFFECTED DEGREE OF
SUPPORT CHINESE OR SOVIETS PREPARED TO GIVE NORTH
KOREAN POSITION IN UNGA. SIGNALS TO KOREANS ON
LEVEL OF SUPPORT THEY PREPARED TO RENDER MIGHT WELL HAVE
DISCOURAGED PYONGYANG.
ENDO WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY INSTANCE IN WHICH
SOVIETS OR CHINESE HAD MADE DIRECT AND EXPLICIT
EXPRESSION OF NON-SUPPORT TO KOREANS. HE AGREED
EAST EUROPEANS HAD ALSO BEEN DISPLEASED BY
PANMUNJOM; YUGOSLAVIA AND ROMANIA IN PARTICULAR
HAD BEEN RESERVED IN THEIR SUPPORT OF HOSTILE
RESOLUTION.

4. ENDO NOTED WITHDRAWAL OF RESOLUTION REPRESENTED
CONSIDERABLE LOSS OF FACE ON PART OF NORTH KOREANS.
HE CONSEQUENTLY SURMISED THAT AS YET UNKNOWN
DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS MUST HAVE PLAYED
SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN NORTH KOREAN DECISION. "SOME
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CHANGE IS TAKING PLACE IN PYONGYANG," HE STATED, BUT
COULD ONLY SPECULATE AS TO WHETHER IT RELATED TO NORTH
KOREA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AN INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE
OR DISAGREEMENT OVER HANDLING OF PANMUNJOM INCIDENT.
AS INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE SUBSURFACE CHANGES, ENDO
POINTED TO REPORTED DISAPPEARANCE OF HEIR APPARENT
KIM CHONG IL'S PORTRAITS FROM PYONG YANG AND CONTINUED
FAILURE TO MAKE LONG OVERDUE ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW

ECONOMIC PLAN.

5. ENDO SUGGESTED NORTH KOREAN LEADERSHIP MIGHT NOW BE CONSIDERING ADOPTION OF MORE FLEXIBLE AND LESS HOSTILE ATTITUDE TOWARD US AND JAPAN. HE SAW WILLINGNESS OF NORTH KOREANS TO RECEIVE JAPANESE DEBT RESCHEDULING DELEGATION AS POSSIBLE PART OF PATTERN (REF A). TEN-MEMBER JAPANESE DELEGATION WAS NOW PREPARING TO VISIT PYONGYANG IN MID-OCTOBER FOR DISCUSSIONS. NORTH KOREAN RESPONSE TO THIS DELEGATION, ENDO STATED, WOULD BE IMPORTANT INDICATOR FOR JAPAN AS TO WHETHER PYONGYANG WAS MOVING TOWARD SOFTER LINE.

6. KEY QUESTION, ENDO STATED, WAS WHETHER NORTH KOREAN WITHDRAWAL AT UN WAS MOMENTARY CHANGE IN DIPLOMATIC TACTICS OR RATHER REPRESENTED MORE FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN NORTH KOREAN STRATEGY. HE ADMITTED THAT IT WAS STILL TOO EARLY TO TELL. BUT, EVEN IF THESE WERE ONLY TACTICAL MOVES, AS THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN DESCRIBED BY PRO-PYONGYANG GROUPS IN JAPAN, THEY NEVERTHELESS COULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STRATEGY. SUCCESS OF NORTH KOREAN RESOLUTION AT UN APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN MAJOR GOAL OF NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN RECENT YEARS. THIS YEAR'S SUDDEN AND UNEXPLAINED WITHDRAWAL OF RESOLUTION MIGHT WELL MAKE REVIVAL OF KOREAN QUESTION NEXT YEAR MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. SIMILARLY, IF NORTH KOREANS CHOOSE TO BECOME MORE RESPONSIVE TO JAPANESE AND OTHERS ON DEBT QUESTION, THIS MIGHT REQUIRE RE-ORDERING OF DOMESTIC ECONOMIC PRIORITIES.

7. COMMENT: IN RECENT ASSESSMENT OF NORTH KOREAN
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POLICY DIRECTIONS (REF B), ENDO, HAD PREDICTED THAT WITHIN THREE TO FIVE YEARS PYONGYANG LEADERSHIP WOULD BE FORCED BY ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, CONTINUED US AND GOJ SUPPORT FOR ROK, AND SUSTAINED ROK ECONOMIC GROWTH TO ADOPT NEW POLICY LINE, POSSIBLY A MORE FLEXIBLE AND LESS HOSTILE POSTURE. WHILE OBVIOUSLY TOO EARLY TO TELL FOR SURE NORTH KOREAN ACTIONS AT UN HAVE NOW STIMULATED FONOFF ANALYSTS TO SPECULATE THAT TIMETABLE POSTULATED EARLIER BY ENDO HAS BEEN MOVED UP, AND THAT RECENT EVENTS IN COLOMBO, PANMUNJOM AND PROBABLY PYONGYANG ITSELF ARE GRADUALLY MOVING NORTH KOREA TOWARDS MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF ITS DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC POSITION. OBSERVERS HERE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT PYONGYANG'S WITHDRAWAL

MOVE REPRESENTS ONLY A TACTICAL DETOUR FROM A
FIXED PATH LEADING TO FAMILIAR GOALS. WE TEND TO AGREE,
BUT FIND INTRIGUING THE NOTION THAT PYONGYANG'S
TACTICAL MOVES MAY MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO REVERT IN
FUTURE TO CONFRONTATIONAL DIPLOMACY, THUS INFLUENCING
FUTURE STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE DPRK. END COMMENT.
HODGSON

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